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The Virtues of knowledge

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فضائل العلم

THE VIRTUES OF KNOWLEDGE¹

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(Riyadh)*

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Indeed, all praise is due to Allaah, we praise Him, we seek His aid, and we ask for His forgiveness. Whomever Allaah guides, there is none to misguide and whoever Allaah misguides there is none to guide. I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allaah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allaah.

To proceed:

This lecture is in response to the request of the brothers and the topic that they chose, which is knowledge and its virtue. Knowledge my brothers, if it is connected to the Book (Qur'aan) means knowledge of the Book (the Qur'aan) and the *sunnah*. Meaning: the knowledge that is used in order to know the *halaal* and the *haram*, and (the knowledge of) what benefits a Muslim in his belief and what harms him and (knowledge) including all matters of worship and belief that Allaah wants from us.

This meaning of knowledge does not necessitate that the Divine Legislation does not allow pursuing other forms of knowledge, rather the Divine Legislation divides knowledge into two categories:

FIRST: Beneficial knowledge

SECOND: Knowledge which does not benefit

Muslim reported a *hadeeth* from Zayd ibn Arqam (*radi Allaahu 'anhu*) that the Prophet (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) said: “O Allaah! I seek refuge in You from knowledge which does not benefit.” Thus, knowledge is either beneficial or not beneficial. As for that knowledge which is categorised as being not beneficial it is permissible and allowed however is of no benefit in the Hereafter. Or such knowledge of no benefit can be impermissible such as

learning magic and other means to impermissible knowledge. Permitted knowledge includes knowledge of worldly matters such as engineering and its like, these types of worldly knowledge have been clearly mentioned by the people of knowledge as being a collective responsibility upon Muslims to gain. Thus, if some Muslims seek it as there is a need for it and there is a good intention then it should be sought upon this.

In any case, knowledge, if it is based on the Book and the *sunnah*, then what is intended is knowledge of the Qur'aan and *sunnah*. I will mention to you now some of the evidences concerning the virtues of knowledge and the things that are connected to it. The first proof is wherein Allaah says:

“Allaah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge by degrees...”

{al-Mujaadilah (58): 11}

On the Day of Judgement you will see the believers in a raised and exalted position and likewise there will also be people who are elevated and raised like stars, **“...those who were given knowledge by degrees”**, means: those who have been given knowledge Allaah raises them in level. If there was not anything else regarding the virtue of knowledge this would have been sufficient.

The second evidence is the saying of Allaah:

“Say (O Muhammad): “Are those who know equal to those who do not know?”

{az-Zumar (39): 9}

Allaah divided between the one who knows His religion, Divine legislation, Book (Qur’aan), *sunnah* of the Prophet (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*), and His Names and Attributes, from the one who does not know.

Also from the evidences, which is the third evidence, is that knowledge benefits even dogs. Ibn Qayyim (*raheemahullaah*) mentioned in his book *Miftaah Daar us-Sa’aadah* that knowledge even benefits dogs. As the trained dog can eat its prey, yet the dog which does not know how to hunt and has not been trained cannot eat its prey. As Allaah says,

“...And (game caught by) what you have trained of hunting animals (i.e. dogs, falcons etc....”

{al-Maa’idah (5): 4}

Meaning: the animals who have been trained how to hunt benefit from such knowledge, Ibn Qayyim (*raheemhullaah*) mentions this in *Miftaah Daar us-Sa’aadah* as does Shaykh ‘AbdurRahmaan as-Sa’adee (*raheemhullaah*) in his *tafseer* and elsewhere.

Also from the virtues of knowledge is what has been verified in the two *sabeehs* from the hadeeth of Mu’awiyah that the Prophet (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) said: “Whoever Allaah wants good for, he gives him understanding of the *deen*.”

Imaam Ibn Taymeeyah (*raheemahullaah*) said in *Majmoo' al-Fataawaa* as does Ibn Qayyim in *Miftaah Daar us-Sa'aadah*, and Ibn Hajar in *Fath ul-Baaree* that it can be understood from this that whoever has not been given understanding of the *deen*, Allaah does not want good for. So therefore, if you see a man that has understanding of the *deen* and knowledge of the Divine Legislation know that Allaah wants good for him. A benefit here my brothers is that the *fiqh* of this *hadeeth* and its intent is: knowledge of the Qur'aan and *sunnah* with evidence along with acting according to it. So if a man knows the rulings of the Divine Legislation and what is *halaal*, *haraam*, permissible and impermissible, yet does not have any evidences such a person is to be known as a *muqallid* and is not known as a "scholar" by consensus, as is mentioned by Ibn 'AbdulBarr who was quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah in *Majmoo' al-Fataawaa* and Ibn Qayyim in *I'lam ul-Munwaqqi'een* who both noted Ibn 'AbdulBarr in highlighting this consensus. So if a man was to come to you and you say **"what is the ruling of this?"** and he says **"the ruling is such and such, obligatory, recommended, disliked"** yet has not memorised the evidences neither does he know the evidences, then he is not considered to be a scholar (*'Aalim*). This is because knowledge of the Divine Legislation is knowing the *halaal* and *haraam* with its evidences and acting in accordance with it.

It is also known my brothers that whoever possesses knowledge and knows the *halaal* and the *haraam*, yet does not act according to it by doing unlawful actions and leaving that which is obligatory or has a corrupt belief and creed regarding the Names of Allaah and His Attributes, is also not considered a scholar (*'Aalim*) according to the Divine Legislation. As in the Divine Legislation whoever does not act according to his knowledge or falls into impermissible matters or leaves the obligatory matters such a person is considered to be ignorant. As is mentioned in the two *sabeehs* with the *hadeeth*

from Aboo Hurayrah (*radi Allaah ‘anhu*) that the Prophet (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) said “*Whoever does not puts forward a false statement and act according to it, intending by it ignorance and disobedience.*” Allaah says:

**“Allaah only accepts the repentance of those who do evil in
ignorance.”**

{*an-Nisaa (4): 17*}

Aboo Aaliyah (*raheemabullaah*) said the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) said that whoever Allaah pardons is ignorant. Hasan al-Basree also mentioned that all those who Allaah pardons are ignorant.

So if a man comes to you who knows the rulings from the Divine Legislation and knows the evidences, yet he is disobedient and commits impermissible actions as unfortunately happens to some of those who have knowledge, as you may seem them listening to music or sitting with musicians whom they like or actors from soap operas, such a person is considered to be ignorant in the scales of the Divine Legislation. As whoever seeks pardon from Allaah is ignorant even if he possesses some knowledge of the Divine Legislation.

Also from the virtues of knowledge is that it is the most virtuous action *alaa itlaaq*. As is the saying of Imaam Ahmad in a narration and also the saying of Aboo Haneefah, Maalik that the most virtuous action is knowledge of the Divine Legislation. Why is knowledge of the Divine Legislation the most virtuous action by agreement? It is due to the fact that there is a need for knowledge for matters of worship. Look at one who prays and establishes the night prayer, such a person praying needs knowledge in order to know

the correctness of his prayer. If for example he errs within the prayer he needs to know how to perform *sujood us-sahn* and its regulations. Any *mujaahid* or person fasting or anyone else needs knowledge in order to know the correctness of their actions from mistakes. Therefore, knowledge does not have anything equal to it and is rich when seeking it, as has been mentioned by some of the companions such as Aboo Dardaa and other companions that they said a night in pursuing knowledge is better than a standing (in night prayer).

Also from the virtues of knowledge, and this is very important is that it clarifies the superfluous knowledge from the esteemed in acts of worships. The one who does not have knowledge does not distinguish between superfluous and esteemed knowledge regarding the acts of worship. For example, reading the Qur'aan is the most virtuous way to remember Allaah as it is reading the speech of Allaah, glory to Him. Within it is a great reward as has been verified by Sa'eed ibn Mansoor from Abdillaah ibn Mas'ood that he said that reciting a letter of the Qur'aan leads to a reward. Abdillaah ibn Mas'ood said that "*do not say that alif laam meem is a letter rather, alif is a letter, laam is a letter and meem is a letter.*" Therefore, if one says **"alhamdulillah"** how much rewards will he get? Enumerate them with me my brothers! Alhamdulillah = *alif* and *laam* and *haa* and *meem* and *daal* and *laam* and *laam* and *haa*, so if one even says **"alhamdulillah"** the rewards will be eight good deeds if Allaah accepts it. The intent here is that the most virtuous way to remember Allaah is by reciting the speech of Allaah. If a man reads the Qur'aan and then the call to prayer is given is the caller to prayer responded with by continuing with reciting the Qur'aan and thereby combining the two acts of worship? One who has no knowledge will say **"By Allaah! The recitation of the Qur'aan is the most virtuous remembrance of Allaah and more virtuous than the *adhaan* and so for that reason I will**

continue with reciting the Qur'aan," this is the one who has no knowledge. As for the one who has knowledge what does he say? He says **"Indeed the *adhaan* is an act of worship that has its time and is a restricted act of worship for a specified period, which is responding to it at the time of the call to prayer by the mu'adhin."** As for reciting the Qur'aan it is unrestricted and can be done at any time so one should continue with the act of worship that he fears will pass and delay the act of worship that he does not fear missing. Therefore, one should respond to the *mu'adhin*.

We can benefit from the *hadeeth* which is in Bukhaaree from Jaabir (*radi Allaah 'anhu*) that the Prophet (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) said *"whoever says when the adhaan is given "O Allaah, Owner of this perfect call and Owner of this prayer to be performed, bestow upon Muhammad al-waseelah and al-fadeelah and send upon him a praised platform which You have promised him."* He (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) said that he will intercede for him on the Day of Judgement." One is rewarded as he has began an act of worship that he fear will pass by over the act of worship that he does not fear will pass by. Therefore, the one who has knowledge is able to differentiate between the acts of worship when they are combined in order to know the superfluous from the esteemed.

A second example that I will present to you is when a man goes to pray the obligatory prayer and the *iqaamah* has been given and the man is standing and the Imaam is organising and straightening the lines then the Imaam makes the opening *takbeer* (*takbeerat ul-Ibraam*) then the man gets out his *siwaak* and begins using it thus delaying his opening *takbeer* due to the virtues of using the *siwaak*. In reality this man, has entered the superfluous into the esteemed and Shaytaan has played with him. If he had knowledge he would have known that the opening *takbeer* is more virtuous than the *siwaak* which

can be done at any time such as before the *iqaamah* and on the *iqaamah* except for the *takbeer*, as we are commanded to follow the Imaam, so how can the use of the *sivaak* take precedence over following the Imaam after his initial *takbeer*?

A third example is when a man enters to pray *jumu'ah* and the Imaam is giving the call to prayer after the Imaam has given salaam. You will see that some of the people stand in order to pray two *rakaats* and thereby has given precedence to that which is not preferred. This is because listening to the *khutbah* is obligatory and responding to the *mu'adhin* is recommended.

The fourth example is that some people come to the *haram* and many Muslims do this, and to Allaah is all praise, they come for *hajj* or *'umrah* yet some of them sit and read the Qur'aan and perform other acts of worship such as superogatory prayers and the likes and all of this is good yet it is obligated to circumambulate the House (i.e. the *Ka'bah*) more than they are able, as *tawaaf* is the most virtuous act of worship by agreement. It is better than reading the Qur'aan and better than praying the *nawaafil* as has been mentioned by 'Ataa ibn Abee Rabah and Imaam Ahmad, why? Because *tawaaf* of the House (*Ka'bah*) is not an act of worship that can be done all the time contrary to reciting the Qur'aan which can be done all the time. The intent here is that when you have precise knowledge you can distinguish between the acts of worship if the more esteemed acts of worship merge together with that which is superfluous.

Knowledge my brothers is the greatest thing that the Divine Legislation is concerned with, the greatest *jibaad* (striving) is the *jibaad* of refuting opposition (to the Divine Legislation). *Jibaad* against all that which opposes

(the Divine Legislation) can only be done with knowledge. As Allaah says to His Prophet when he was in Makkah,

“...and strive against them with it (i.e. the Qur’aan) a great striving.”

{*an-Furqaan: (25): 52*}

The *jihad* here that the verse intends is that of striving with the Qur’aan in order to spread the Qur’aan and the *deen* of Allaah and an exposition of the futility of their (idolatrous) worship.

Therefore, the greatest *jihad* my brothers is that of refuting opposition (to the Divine legislation) and refuting the people of innovation. This is the *jihad* of clarifying the mistakes of those who fall into error and try to attach this error to the Divine Legislation. Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, Aboo ‘Ubayd, Shaykh ‘AbdurRahmaan as-Sa’ddee and others from the people of knowledge mentioned that refuting the opposers is greater than the *jihad* on the battlefield. Ibn Taymiyyah said that a man once said to Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal “Shall I make devote myself to Allaah for a month or refute the people of innovation” Imaam Ahmad replied “*Refute the people of innovation as your refutation of the people of innovation will have great benefits for not only yourself but for all of the Muslims. But if you are to devote yourself in worship then that has a benefit solely for yourself not for the Muslims as a whole.*”

Therefore, O my brothers we are not able to establish this great act of worship, the act of refuting the opposers (of the *da’wah* of *ahl us-sunnah*, the *da’wah salafyyah*) from the people of innovation and other than them, except with knowledge. With the weapon of knowledge at hand, we are able but without it we are not able.

I will take this opportunity to warn all of my brothers of the intense strangeness that we live in at present with adhering to real Islaam, the Islaam that was practiced by the Prophet (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) and his companions. The Prophet (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) spoke the truth as in reported in the hadeeth in Saheeh Muslim from Ibn ‘Umar and Abee Hurayrah wherein he said “*Islaam began as something strange and will return as something strange*”, and in the hadeeth from Abee Hurayrah he (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) said “*toobah (a tree in Paradise) is for the strangers.*”

Currently my brothers we live in a time wherein the *sunnah* has become something strange, look at those around you in the world! Even if I mean the *kuffaar* countries such as Britain or in other places, but I just want to take you to the Muslim countries, the Arabian peninsula and what surrounds it from the many countries. We ask Allaah to establish them on *eemaan*, the *sunnah* and *tawheed*. How many places are there within the Muslim countries which are worshiped other than Allaah, claiming for example that such places are graves of the pious? One of the countries, on the birthday of one who they call a “*walee*” (friend/ally of Allaah), three million people gathered around the grave of this “*walee*” making *tawaaf* around his grave! Imagine three million people who say “we are Muslims” yet they attend the grave of this “*walee*” and make sacrifices to him, take oaths by him and call upon him other than Allaah, *Mighty and Majestic*. Also in another country, a small area has one hundred graves that are worshipped other than Allaah! How my brothers is Shaytaan able to spread *shirk* and its related practices of idolatry? Shaytaan is only able to this by spreading ignorance amongst the Muslims, by Allaah if Muslims had knowledge most, if not all, of these practices would vanish! However, due to the spread of ignorance amongst the Muslims our condition has become as you see. We are not able to rid

ourselves of these practices except with knowledge of the *sharee'ah* (Divine Legislation).

How many satellite channels have now entered within the lands of the Muslims which put forth doubts and the people of innovation in the name of the *deen*? It is not possible to refute this except with knowledge. By Allaah my brothers, we have to seek knowledge of the Divine Legislation in order to be able to aid the *deen* of Muhammad (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*), and raise the flag of *tawheed* and lower the flag of *shirk*, and spread the *sunnah* among ourselves and suppress innovation and spread *tawheed* and lower the flag of *shirk*.

By Allaah my brother, truth when it comes it destroys that which is futile, even a small amount of the truth can dissipate a large amount of oppression, as Allaah says

“We dash the truth against the falsehood, and it destroys it, and behold, it is vanished. And woe to you for that lie which you ascribe.”

{al-Anbiya (21): 18}

And Allaah also says,

“Allaah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession (to authority) upon the earth just as he granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them (therein) their religion which He has preferred for them and that he will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security (for) they worship Me, not associating anything with Me.”

{an-Noor (24): 55}

By Allaah, if we turn to Allaah worshipping Him only and being sincere to Him not associating partners in worship with Him, Allaah would help and support us and the power of the Muslims would return to them and the Muslims would overcome the *kuffaar* and the flag of *tawbeed* and the sunnah would be raised. However, when the Muslims became deficient in this, we have the condition that we are in now. Our Lord, Allaah said in *Soorat ur-Room*:

“(It is) the promise of Allaah. Allaah does not fail in His promise, but most of the people do not.”

{*ar-Room* (30): 6}

This is a promise from Allaah, if we establish His *deen*, He will help us,

“...if you support Allaah, he will support you and plant firmly your feet”

{*Muhammad* (47): 7}

If we do the contrary, by spreading *shirk* and innovations, then Allaah will afflict us,

“Why (is it that) when a single disaster struck you (on the day of Uhud), although you had struck (the enemy in the battle of Badr) with one twice as great, you said “From where is that?” Say, “It is from yourselves (i.e. due to your sin).” Indeed, Allaah is over all things competent.”

{*Aali-Imraan* (3): 165}

**“Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by (reason of)
what the hands of people have earned...”**

{ar-Room (30): 41}

So with the spread of innovations the Muslims have thus become as you seem them, and what is also strange is that Muslims think that spread of the Muslims is a source of strength over their enemies and this a mistake. Allaah said on the day of (the battle of) Hunayn,

**“...when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at
all”**

{at-Tawbah (9): 25}

By Allaah, whatever is our enemy and whoever is our enemy as long as we have the strength of *eemaan*, *tawheed* and the *sunnah* Allaah will help us to overcome them and he will open up for us reasons and ways which our enemies cannot confront.

Some Muslims come and say **“occupy yourselves with knowledge of current affairs (fiqh ul-waaqi’), in order to confront the enemy.”** They thus preoccupy the people with this affair, which is not a transmitted authentic means (from the Qur’aan and *sunnah*), and is actually based on rationalist theories and conjecture as the Prophet (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) said in the two *sabeehs* in the *hadeeth* from Abee Hurayah (*radi Allaahu ‘anhu*) *“Beware of conjecture as it is harder upon you than iron,”* they preoccupy the people with such conjecture and affairs which are not sanctioned as opposed to learning and studying the Divine Legislation! Thus, strangely you will see

some of these Muslims gathering for an hour or two or even more or less, discussing issues of politics each to his own opinion! And if an issue regarding the Divine Legislation was to come up you will find that they are the most ignorant of people! Indeed, if you see them reciting the Qur'aan they are not able to recite correctly! They thus err in their recitation. Why do not we as Muslims preoccupy ourselves with that which will get us closer to Allaah? As life is short and it is a temporal abode not one of settlement.

By Allaah, if we were to hold firmly to our *deen* the plots and plans of the enemies would go back on them, as Allaah says,

“And if you are patient and fear Allaah, their plot will not harm you at all.”

{*Aali-Imraan* (3): 120}

“But they plan and Allaah plans, and Allaah is the best of planners.”

{*al-Anfaal* (8): 30}

“Indeed, they are planning a plan, but I am planning a plan. So allow time for the disbelievers. Leave them for a while (i.e. do not be in haste for revenge, for you will see what will become of them)”

{*at-Taariq* (86): 15-17}

So therefore my brothers, O Allaah, O Allaah teach us, our children, and our brothers the *deen* of Muhammad (*sallallaahu alyhi wassallam*), the clear *deen* as it came from Allaah and as was practiced by the Prophet (*sallallaahu alyhi wassallam*) and his companions.

We ask Allaah, who there is none to worship besides Him, to bless us with beneficial knowledge and righteous actions and calling to them both and having patience upon any hardships with them both and to make us callers to *tawheed* and the *sunnah* until we meet Him...

...and may Allaah increase you all in goodness.